

IDEAS AT *Work*

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

'Filenotes' program proves real time-saver

Sometimes the handiest programs for personal computers are the simplest and most inexpensive. "Filenotes" is just such a program. It helps keep track of files stored on your computer's floppy or hard disk.

Written for IBM PCs and PC-compatible computers, the \$41.95 program from Practical Peripherals of Westlake Village, Calif., is a god-send to those who use computers a great deal. It's especially good for people who generate many letters and documents, and because it helps locate files quickly, it's great for offices where many people are accessing the same files.

Here's how it works:

✓ Once Filenotes is set up to load itself, it's always available for use, regardless of what other program you're working with. The set-up uses something called an "autoexec.bat" file. When you touch the "Alt" and "I" keys simultaneously, or any other combination you select during set up, a box pops up on your screen with the Filenotes program.

✓ When the box appears, it shows a listing of all file names in the current directory. You can then move the cursor to any file name and touch the "enter" key, and an "index card" appears in the box with that file name. If you've previously entered information about the file on the index card, then it is displayed; if not, you can add information. The information can be changed at any time.

✓ You can set the program to provide you with specific file names, such as those that end in ".wp". This feature is handy if you have many similar file names. For example, I set up Filenotes to display all my newspaper articles like this: "news# ?? .wp," where the

"??" represents any two-digit number. Then, on each index card I listed the topic of that article.

✓ When looking for a particular topic, you can flip through the cards quickly by touching the "Pg Dn" or "Pg Up" keys. Up to 300 cards could be listed for any one

directory, which is far more than is normally needed for business applications.

At any point, you can return to the program you were previously working in by touching the "Esc" key. Any changes made to the cards are saved to your floppy diskette or hard disk for future reference.



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Filenotes was released in October. Consequently, there are still a few rough edges. For example, it cannot list files that are stored on floppy diskettes if you booted the Filenotes program from a hard disk. The programmer, David Sidrane, assured me that this will be corrected in the next version. However, the release date for the next version has not yet been set.

Also, although you don't need the documentation after you learn the few necessary key combinations, the instructions are not as easy to understand as they could be. Even after rereading everything several times, I missed the important feature that allows you to flip through the cards quickly by using the "Pg Dn" and "Pg Up" keys. I only learned of the feature by asking the programmer if it had that type of function.

Aside from these few limitations, I found it easy to set up and a pleasure to use. For business offices that work with dozens or hundreds of files on a regular basis, I recommend it heartily. And, if you have more than one person setting up files that are used by others, it could become a real time-saver — with habit.

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